

ABM

The Missile Race

Pentagon Aides Say Prolonged Talks Will 'Freeze' Soviet Lead Over U.S.

By HANSON W. BALDWIN

United States military officers think that the Soviet leaders have everything to gain and nothing to lose by discussing the possible curtailment of the nuclear missile race.

This belief is based on the judgment that the Soviet Union is ahead of the United States in defensive missile systems and is gaining in terms of the numbers and payload capability of its offensive missiles. Discussions would "freeze" this advantage, at least for a time.

News Analysis

The missile talks starting in Moscow will deal with both offensive and defensive missiles. Military officials in the Pentagon were not surprised by the Soviet readiness to "discuss" the situation. They believe that discussions—which might drag on for a long time—are to the Russians' interest politically, psychologically and militarily.

The Senate Armed Services Committee took cognizance of this prevailing military opinion a few days ago when, in its report on the Armed forces appropriation bill for 1968, it stated:

"The committee considers that it would be unwise to permit these negotiations to be extended interminably . . . and if . . . an agreement cannot be concluded within a reasonable period, the committee strongly believes the United States should begin procurement for deployment of an antiballistic missile defense system."

Familiar Views Heard Again

The arguments in favor of the negotiations put forward by some American political leaders, scientists and economists reflect the same views that were persuasive to Congress when the ban on nuclear testing in the atmosphere was ratified in 1963.

Any check to the arms race is viewed as desirable in itself. In addition, many scientists would like to halt the development of military missile technology at about its present level to pre-

vent escalation of the arms race and what they feel would be a dangerous disturbance of the so-called "balance of terror."

These scientists hold that any antiballistic missile system that can now be produced represents a kind of Maginot Line—an imagined security. No such system can be more than fractionally effective, they argue, and deployment of such systems would represent a waste of billions of dollars with no added security to either side.

Some scientists have gone so far as to predict that if the United States did not initiate development and deployment of such systems, the Russians would not do so.

Military Men Dubious

Military men contend, however, that the "if-we-don't-do-it-the-Russians-won't" philosophy already has been proved wrong, and say there is incontrovertible evidence that Moscow has started an extensive deployment of an antiballistic missile system. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have unanimously recommended the start of such a system in the United States, and have disagreed with Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, who opposes it.

Military men also say that whereas the number of offensive missiles now being produced by the United States is leveling off, the number of Soviet offensive missiles is increasing rapidly. The past advantage enjoyed by the United States in both numbers of missiles and in weight of nuclear explosives carried is being steadily reduced, they assert.

It is for these reasons that the military feels the Russians welcome discussions. These talks commit Moscow to nothing, but so long as they continue they represent a political and psychological roadblock to initiation of an antiballistic missile system in this country, or to further expansion of the United States' military strength.

There has been considerable sentiment in Congress supporting deployment of a defensive missile system. But as long as there appears to be even a slight hope for a United States-Soviet missile limitation agreement, Congressmen's backers of a de-

fensive missile system will probably have little support for any attempt to bring about an immediate American deployment.

Furthermore, with the talks started, pressure from other nations on Washington will tend to discourage any attempt to break them off or limit them.

What the military leaders fear most is protracted extension of the discussions with no clear results. In effect, they feel this would restrict the United States in missile deployment but not the Soviet Union.

This military opinion is based on intelligence reports showing that Moscow is being ringed with an antiballistic missile defensive system, already partly operational and expected to be fully so within 18 months.

A United States defensive system, on the other hand, is still under development. A majority of the military also believe that other extensive missile installations covering much

Talks Open on Missiles

MOSCOW, March 23 (AP)—

The United States and the Soviet Union began today to arrange for negotiations to limit the arms race in offensive and defensive nuclear missiles.

President Johnson announced three weeks ago that the Russians had agreed to discuss such a limitation. After a delay, while Washington sent instructions to the United States Embassy, Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson called today on Andrei A. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister.

The embassy announced that the "preliminary discussions" lasted 30 minutes. The Soviet press did not report the meeting.

Washington is seeking to halt Soviet construction of anti-missile defenses, which threaten to force the United States into an expensive program of its own.

The Soviet leaders are not committed to slow their anti-missile effort, but are interested in a deal to reduce the present American advantage in offensive missiles.

of the western periphery of the Soviet Union are antiballistic missile defenses of a new type—a judgment with which the Central Intelligence Agency disagrees.

It is against a background of intensive Soviet effort that the missile limitations discussions are beginning. They come at a time when missile technology is in a state of ferment. In nearly all fields of offensive and defensive missiles, performance—accuracy, payload, guidance, maneuverability and multiple warheads—is on the verge of major improvement.

The military men do not believe that technology can be frozen, or will indeed come to a halt, regardless of how long the discussions or what agreements are made. They believe, therefore, that United States technology should not be hobbled or restrained, but rather encouraged to keep ahead of that of the Russians.